

# Research for NSW Public Education

## Our Research Statement



# About our Research Statement

This Research Statement creates the opportunity for NSW to become a leader in evidence-based education to help create an outstanding and equitable education system.

Research helps us to identify and deliver what works best for our students and those who support them. We need research evidence that will guide teachers and educators and help us make well-informed decisions.

Our research is most valuable when we engage teachers, educators and researchers in all our settings and actively work together to turn research findings into meaningful action.

## Our research

- Is practice-focused and feeds back into NSW public education
- Supports Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander led research and principles
- Is rigorous, ethical and culturally responsive
- Addresses gaps in knowledge that are directly aligned to our priorities
- Is collaborative across the whole education sector

Read more in the section 'Our research activities' on page 9.

## Our commitment

Our research is strategically aligned to support all NSW students to learn, grow and belong in an outstanding and equitable education system.

## Our objectives

- Create research that will inform our practice, programs and policies
- Use research to support our teachers, educators and students
- Build research capability across the system
- Make it easier to conduct research aligned to our needs

Read more in the section 'Our objectives' on page 4.

## Our evidence needs

We need to prioritise research evidence that will help us deliver the focus areas of Our Plan for NSW Public Education:

- advance equitable outcomes, opportunities and experiences
- strengthen trust and respect for the teaching profession and school support staff
- give children the best start in learning
- deliver outstanding leadership, teaching and learning
- strengthen student wellbeing and development
- provide meaningful post-school pathways.

Read more about our evidence needs in Research for NSW Public Education – A Guide to Our Evidence Needs.

### Our research will help all parts of our education system

- Early childhood education
- Public schools
- Skills and higher education





# Secretary's foreword

Research is central to building an outstanding and equitable public education system where every student can learn, grow, and belong. By sharpening our focus on what works best, we are better positioned to unlock potential and set students on a brighter path.

At the Department of Education, we are committed to creating a culture of evidence-informed action. By partnering with researchers, we gain powerful tools to support students, teachers, and communities in ways that make a difference.

Our success hinges on staying connected with educators and ensuring research findings are practical and impactful. We will be clear with researchers on the evidence needs and policy contexts of our education settings. In turn, we encourage them to align their work with a shared vision for a system-wide uplift. The best research always goes beyond the page and informs practices, programs, and policies that bring real value to the classroom.

We must also be strategic with our research pursuits and protect the precious time of our workforce. With research requests on the rise, it's important that each project supports our goals, upholds high standards, and delivers clear educational benefits. Every effort must support, and never distract from, our core business of teaching and learning.

This document is the department's first Research Statement and builds on a proud history of using research and evaluation to uncover tried and tested solutions. By now explicitly describing our approach, we further direct our focus to where it will count the most.

These outcomes feed into the wider commitments laid out by Our Plan for NSW Public Education to provide opportunities for all and transform lives through learning. We look forward to working with our research partners to keep maximising that impact.

**Murat Dizdar PSM**

Secretary, NSW Department of Education





“ We always stay up-to-date with what’s happening in research. As teachers, we want to know that we’re doing the best things possible for our students.”

Genelle Goldfinch, Principal of Fairfield West Public School

## Our objectives

### 1. Create research that will inform our practice, programs and policies

#### Why is this important?

The NSW education system is complex. Research evidence will bring rigour and drive the right kinds of system improvement activities to achieve the best educational outcomes for all our students.

#### What will we do?

- 1.1 Establish research priorities to inform research activities. These will be reviewed annually to identify emerging priorities.
- 1.2 Develop a research partnership framework to enable us to consistently, efficiently and equitably leverage the expertise in the higher education sector and other organisations.
- 1.3 Contribute to state, national and international knowledge about evidence-based educational policies, programs and practices.

## 2. Use research to support our teachers, educators and students

### Why is this important?

We need to make our research available and practical for those who will use it.

### What will we do?

- 2.1 Build connections with teachers, educators, researchers and Education support staff throughout the research cycle.
- 2.2 Promote and share research findings with all involved in education across NSW in an accessible format.

## 3. Build research capability across the system

### Why is this important?

We need our staff to have the confidence and know-how to conduct, find and use research effectively.

### What will we do?

- 3.1 Create ways for teachers, educators, students and parents to be heard and involved in research activities.
- 3.2 Provide user-friendly guidance to help staff build their research skills to drive capability in the use of data and evidence as part of everyday practice.

## 4. Make it easier to conduct research aligned to our needs

### Why is this important?

We need to make sure that the way we do research is streamlined, transparent, timely and coherent.

### What will we do?

- 4.1 Improve our research governance.
- 4.2 Strengthen the role and function of the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) as the department's hub for research, evidence and evaluation.
- 4.3 Streamline our processes for accessing data and conducting research in schools.
- 4.4 Make the best use of our data and research assets.



“ We need research that can really make a difference. This statement will make sure we focus our research efforts on work that supports our teachers, support staff and schools.”

Murat Dizdar, Secretary

## Why we developed this Research Statement

- To form better coherence between the research evidence we create and the research evidence we need
- To improve the way research informs our system stewardship, practice, programs and policy
- To uplift capability to engage in evidence-based policy and practice across all parts of the NSW education system
- To improve our processes for managing and supporting high-quality research

## Who will use this Research Statement?

### Teachers, educators and leaders in schools, skills and early childhood education settings

The statement will assist teachers, educators and leaders to:

- find clear information on evidence-based practices that help all students to learn, grow and belong
- apply practices that are supported by sound research and relevant to their own classroom context
- get involved in relevant education research and build research skills and confidence.

### Education researchers

The statement will assist education researchers to:

- understand the department's research evidence needs and expectations
- find clear information on how the department will draw on research expertise to answer specific questions, inform policy development and support innovation
- collaborate with the department to conduct and publish research efficiently, through internal process improvements.

### Education policy professionals

The statement will assist education policy professionals to:

- use research to develop evidence-based options for policy problems and gain insights for specific program areas and system management
- conduct and implement education research to address policy problems
- improve internal processes to support department research engagements and increase the visibility of research across the system.



# What's in scope of this Research Statement?

We gather evidence from many sources to inform our education practice, programs and policy. The Research Statement is focused on evidence from both research and evaluation.

## In scope

### Research

The creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge to generate concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings that address timely and important gaps and issues. This includes both conducting primary research and synthesising and analysing previous research to the extent that it addresses current and emerging knowledge gaps and contributes to NSW public education.<sup>1</sup>

### Evaluation

A systematic and transparent process that can be used to assess the appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness or net social benefits of an initiative.<sup>2</sup>

While we acknowledge that research and evaluation may ask different questions, both involve the gathering of empirical evidence, have similar principles and use many of the same tools and methods. Therefore, throughout this statement, the term 'research' is used to cover both research and evaluation.

We will regularly review and articulate our current and emerging evidence needs to allow the research sector to plan and align its research with our needs. Our current research evidence needs are outlined in [Research for NSW Public Education – A Guide to Our Evidence Needs](#).

There are other useful ways of gathering information, such as performance monitoring activities, but they are not in scope of this statement.

## Out of scope

- **Customer experience** such as satisfaction surveys, social and market research, opinion polls, consumer consultation
- **Performance monitoring** such as data analytics, program reviews
- **Continuous improvement** such as practice improvement in education settings, needs assessment, Strategic Improvement Plans
- **Analytics and business cases** such as analysis to support design and planning, feasibility studies, economic modelling

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018

<sup>2</sup> [NSW Government Evaluation Policy and Guidelines](#)



## The Research Statement works alongside the Re-imagining Evaluation Framework

Our Re-imagining Evaluation Framework centres Aboriginal students, their families, and their communities at the heart of evaluation and aims to challenge existing assumptions and power relationships in education.<sup>3</sup> The framework is for everyone, including researchers across all education settings.

This Research Statement embraces the framework and applies its guiding principles to all research methodologies and processes. We are committed to doing research in ways that allow us to truly understand what is and is not valued, and what is and is not working, for Aboriginal students, their families and their communities in public education.

We recognise the history of poor research practices in Australia, the ongoing harm they have caused for Aboriginal people and the systemic inequalities perpetuated from misuse of research and data.

The framework and its principles aim to challenge existing assumptions and power relationships in education. By working alongside the framework, this Research Statement signals a commitment to culturally responsive, beneficial research that includes Aboriginal peoples as valued partners moving forward, with reference to their knowledges and perspectives that have been shaped by lived experiences.

### Further reading

- [Re-imagining Evaluation: A Culturally Responsive Evaluation Framework](#)
- [AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research](#)
- [NHMRC Ethical guidelines for research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples](#)
- [Maiaṃ nayri Wingara principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance](#)

<sup>3</sup> The term Aboriginal is used in the Re-imagining Evaluation Framework to refer to both Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and staff in NSW for brevity and readability. Where the terms 'Indigenous' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' are used instead, they reflect the terminology used in the cited documents and policies.



# Our research activities

Table 1

Our research activities

| Research activity  | Description   |
|--|---|
| <b>Internal research</b>   | We undertake in-depth research, evaluation and analysis of education policy, programs and outcomes across early childhood education, schools, vocational and educational training, and higher education to inform whole-of-government, evidence-based decision-making.  |
| <b>External research</b>   | We invest significantly in research conducted by universities and the education research sector through funding schemes such as the <a href="#">Screen Use and Addiction Research Fund</a> and <a href="#">Education Strategic Research Fund</a> , and programs such as those led by the <a href="#">Paul Ramsay Foundation</a> and the <a href="#">James Martin Institute for Public Policy</a> .                            |
| <b>Collaborative research</b>  | We engage in university collaborations for specific projects and ad-hoc commissioned work. We provide in-kind support for researchers to work with our staff and use our administrative and research datasets to close evidence gaps through a range of projects, from rapid reviews to major funded research collaborations.   |
| <b>Enabling and approving research in our educational settings</b>                     | We approve research in NSW public schools through the <a href="#">NSW State Education Research and Partnerships (SERAP) process</a> to ensure it is ethical, rigorous, has potential educational benefits that outweigh the potential costs (particularly the burden on school staff and disruption to teaching and learning), and meets our objectives and evidence needs (refer to 'Our evidence needs' section on page 2). |
| <b>Building research capabilities within the education workforce</b>                   | We support education professionals to develop and strengthen their research and evaluation skills, and drive capability building in the use of data and evidence as part of everyday practice.  |
| <b>Implementing and communicating research to all involved in delivering education</b> | CESE publications and resources bring together the evidence base and help to inform education practice, programs and policy. An example of this is the <a href="#">What Works Best</a> resources, which outline 8 quality teaching practices that are known to support students to achieve their potential through education.   |

## Our research assets

We maintain key education research evidence and data collections related to early childhood education, schools, skills and higher education. These are available to researchers through our publications and the [NSW Department of Education Insights Hub](#). There are nearly 300 datasets, resources and publications available, with new data added regularly.

Our data services team can assist researchers with finding data, submitting requests for custom data and questions relating to department data.

For more information, please contact [data services](#).



# Research showcase

## Thrive: Finishing school well

An innovative research-in-action partnership will work to understand the diverse and intersecting factors that contribute to students' experiences of school and their opportunities to thrive within education settings.

'Thrive: Finishing School Well' is a 3.5-year research program that brings together world-class statisticians, computer scientists, social scientists and policy professionals.

The NSW Department of Education is collaborating with the University of Technology Sydney and Western Sydney University, who are funded by the Paul Ramsay Foundation. This program of work is also supported by the CSIRO who are providing funding for embedded higher degree research scholarships.

The partnership will work with schools, families and communities to co-design new initiatives to break down barriers related to educational disadvantage so that all students can thrive.

Through the collaborative model, the work will address the department's most pressing needs for research on how to best support students to finish school well. The team will translate the findings to be applicable in the development of initiatives, policy solutions and program design, for consideration by the department. By working together, the research will create meaningful change for NSW students.

“ Decision makers need useful information, not volumes of data, and useful information comes from many sources; communities, educational experts as well as observed data. Using these sources, the techniques we develop will allow us to rapidly learn which policies, programs or supports most help children finish school well, and to learn how these will vary across communities, with circumstances and over time.”

**Professor Sally Cripps, Thrive program lead for the University of Technology Sydney**



# Next steps to implement this statement

Success in delivering our Research Statement will require:

- stakeholder engagement and collaboration across the education sector, with academic institutions, government and other stakeholders
- access to research expertise within and beyond the department
- effective governance and management
- flexibility to tailor actions resulting from the statement to local contexts and new issues
- efficient processes for accessing education settings and data for research
- effective mechanisms to translate research findings into our system stewardship, practice, programs and policy
- regular monitoring and review to ensure the statement is achieving its objectives.

The table below presents a high-level implementation plan that will be further developed and adjusted as the Research Statement is rolled out.

**Table 2**

**Research Statement implementation activities**

| Implementation phase   | Activity   | Objective |
|--|--|-----------|
| <b>Initial establishment<br/>(0–3 months)</b>                    | Establish governance structure   | 4.1       |
|  | Establish research priorities  | 1.1       |
|  | Establish mechanisms for engagement with teachers, educators, education leaders, students, parents, academic sector and research community | 2.1, 3.1  |
|  | Establish management structure, processes and operational planning to implement the Research Statement                                     | 4.2       |
| <b>Developing new processes and mechanisms<br/>(0–12 months)</b> | Develop a research partnership framework   | 1.2       |
|  | Establish mechanisms and develop guidance to facilitate access, use, commissioning and creation of research evidence                       | 3.2       |
|  | Create a knowledge-to-action model   | 2.1       |
|  | Improve and streamline internal processes to enable research   | 4.3, 4.4  |
| <b>Ongoing activities</b>  | Ongoing engagement with teachers, educators, education leaders, students, parents, academic sector and research community                  | 3.1       |
|  | Contribute to state, national and international knowledge about evidence-based educational practice, programs and policy                   | 1.3       |
|  | Showcase our research to all involved in education across NSW and beyond   | 2.2       |
| <b>Monitoring and review</b>                                     | Review progress towards achieving the objectives of this statement annually  | –         |
|  | Undertake a more in-depth midpoint and final review  | –         |

To contact the department's Research and Partnerships team for further information, please email [research.partnerships@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:research.partnerships@det.nsw.edu.au).



# Glossary of key terms

**Table 3**  
**Glossary of key terms**

| Term   | Definition   |
|--|--|
| <b>Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE)</b>     | CESE undertakes in-depth analysis of education programs and outcomes across early childhood, school, training and higher education to inform whole-of-government, evidence-based decision-making.  |
| <b>Education settings</b>  | Covers all our settings in early childhood education, public schools and skills in the NSW public education system.  |
| <b>Education support staff</b>                                   | Non-teaching staff in schools, skills and early childhood education settings and in NSW Department of Education central offices.   |
| <b>Educators</b>   | Education professionals, including teachers, leaders and early childhood educators, who provide education in early childhood, primary, secondary, vocational and higher education settings.  |
| <b>Evaluation</b>  | A systematic and transparent process that can be used to assess the appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness or net social benefits of an initiative. <sup>4</sup>   |
| <b>NSW Department of Education – ‘the department’</b>            | The largest provider of public education in Australia, with responsibility for delivering high-quality public education to two-thirds of the NSW student population.   |
| <b>State Education Research and Partnerships (SERAP) process</b> | A process within the NSW Department of Education for gaining permission to conduct research in public schools. SERAP supports the quality of research activities in NSW public schools by assessing applications to conduct research. Research cannot be conducted in NSW public schools without the approval of the department.   |
| <b>Policy professionals</b>                                      | System stewards, including policymakers, advisors and support staff in the public service policy advisory system. The primary assigned administrator(s) (for example, policy officers) responsible for maintenance and day-to-day tasks that support the system.   |
| <b>Qualitative research</b>                                      | Qualitative research aims to answer questions about how and why things have happened. It is used to gain insights into phenomena, groups or experiences that cannot be objectively measured, and to generate new theories. Qualitative data is descriptive information. It can be gathered from in-depth interviews, observations, surveys or questionnaires. Surveys collect qualitative data if they involve asking people for detailed (free-text) responses.   |
| <b>Quantitative research</b>                                     | Quantitative research aims to provide objective information using mathematical and statistical methods. It is used to establish causal explanations, determine relationships between variables, test predictions and generalise results to wider populations. Quantitative data is always numerical and is used to find out a quantity, such as how much, how many or how often. It can be collected via a range of methods such as observation, interviews, surveys, questionnaires, assessments or tests. Surveys are quantitative if they involve rating things on a numerical scale or counting responses. |

<sup>4</sup> [NSW Government Evaluation Policy and Guidelines](#)

| Term   | Definition   |
|--|--|
| <b>Research</b>  | The creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge to generate concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings that address timely and important gaps and issues. This includes both conducting primary research and synthesising and analysing previous research to the extent that it addresses current and emerging knowledge gaps and contributes to NSW public education. <sup>5</sup> |
| <b><a href="#">Research for NSW Public Education – A Guide to Our Evidence Needs</a></b> | A separate document which outlines the NSW Department of Education’s priorities for research.  |
| <b>Students</b>  | Children, young people and adult learners in all education settings.   |

5 [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018](#)

**Authors:** CESE and MH Consulting Group (MHC)

**Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation**

GPO Box 33, Sydney NSW 2001, Australia

✉ [info@cese.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@cese.nsw.gov.au)

🌐 [education.nsw.gov.au/cese](http://education.nsw.gov.au/cese)

🗨️ [yammer.com/det.nsw.edu.au](https://yammer.com/det.nsw.edu.au)

Licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#)

**Please cite this publication as:**

CESE (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation) and MHC (MH Consulting Group) (2024) *Research for NSW Public Education – Our Research Statement*, NSW Department of Education.

